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ABSTRACT

The three papers describe current projects in the field for the visually handicapped which are directed toward improvement of educational programs in both day and residential settings. The first paper (by F. Roberts) reviews the process employed for revising the standards for residential schools. Discussed in the second paper (by G. Scholl) is the study to develop a similar self-study and evaluation guide for day programs. In a final paper, S. Spungin examines two projects--one on identifying competencies needed by teachers of the visually handicapped and the other on the formulation of guidelines for public school programs serving visually handicapped children. (SBH)

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Applying Standards to Improve Programs for Visually Handicapped Children and Youth in Residential and Day Schools

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Papers presented at the 56th Annual
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The three papers included in this section describe current projects in the field for the visually handicapped which are directed toward improvement of educational programs in both day and residential settings. All three projects have included extensive input from the field; all three have been underway for the past two to three years; and now all three are completed or nearing completion.

The first paper describes the process employed for revising the standards for residential schools. The National Accreditation Council has used the Self-Study and Evaluation Guide for Residential Schools in the accreditation of residential schools. However, this Guide, developed in 1968, is out-of-date and does not recognize the special needs of visually handicapped pupils with other impairments who constitute a large percentage of the current school population. Mrs. Ferne Roberts discusses the process used in revising the standards.

The second paper describes the study which was undertaken by Dr. Geraldine T. Scholl to develop a similar self-study and evaluation guide for day programs. This study was funded in past by the National Study of School Evaluation and the Association for Education of the Visually Handicapped.

Finally, in the third paper, Dr. Susan J. Spungin describes two projects sponsored by the American Foundation for the Blind. The first was directed toward identifying competencies needed by teachers of the visually handicapped and the second describes the formulation of guidelines for public school programs serving visually handicapped children.

STATUS OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL STANDARDS

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In the 1960's the concept of accountability was being increasingly pressed upon educational, social service and rehabilitation agencies. Of course institutions for professional education began standard setting and accreditation more than 50 years before with schools, and many other professions followed suit. More recently, standards for library service, hospital operation, community nursing services and child and family welfare services had been formulated. The "Hamlin Report", Voluntary Health and Welfare Agencies in the United States--An Exploratory Study by an Ad Hoc Citizens Committee which was issued in 1961, underscored the need for the evaluation of health and welfare programs. The report voiced the conviction that the public deserved to receive "more objective information about agencies' purposes,program content, administration, physical facilities, board structure and function, personnel, financing and budgeting, and relations with other agencies and the community (Hamlin, 1961, p 17).

For fifty years or more, workers with and for the visually handicapped had sought to formulate guidelines through which they could assess their work and move it to higher levels (COMSTAC, 1966). The Association for Education of the Visually Handicapped and the American Association of Workers for the Blind, two membership associations, had over the years set up various guidelines relating to quality of service. For example, in the absence of state and national criteria for the certification of teachers of visually handicapped children in residential schools, AEVH in the 1950's appointed a standing Committee on Certification. This committee developed criteria and it continues to award certification to qualified teachers upon application. Similarly, in 1954 AAWB adopted a Code of Ethics and established a procedure for awarding the Seal of Good Practice to agencies which met the Code's provisions. During this fifty year period the American Foundation for the Blind, a national consultative agency, directed most of its attention to

the improvement of standards of service to visually handicapped children and adults. In the field of education the AFB staff produced documents, sponsored conferences and stimulated university training which were designed to improve the education of preschool and school age children.

Fortunately the pressure for accountability, the "Hamlin Report", and the field's own urge toward improvement of services through the application of standards were perceived as a mandate by the American Foundation for the Blind. Through its fiscal and staff support the Commission on Standards and Accreditation of Services for the Blind (COMSTAC) was established in 1961. Convinced that this was an idea whose hour had come, AFB charged COMSTAC to conduct a study to develop a method and structure necessary to initiate an accreditation program in the field of work with the visually handicapped. Over 136 staff and volunteers who were leaders in the field worked together for two years to organize standards and recommend a procedure for accreditation. (COMSTAC, 1966). Countless other professionals reviewed the documents and gave advice regarding their improvement.

In 1966 COMSTAC completed its charge to develop standards in five areas of administration and seven fields of service, including education, and issued its report The Comstac Report: Standards for Strenghtened Services. The most significant outcome of the COMSTAC Commission's report was the formation of the National Accreditation Council of Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped (NAC). The major thrust of NAC during its early years was the development of instruments which would serve as guides for the self-evaluation and subsequent on-site review required of schools and agencies applying for accreditation.

At that time NAC recognized that time and fiscal restrictions precluded the development of instruments for all areas of education of visually handicapped children and youth. Choices must be made. Since it was felt that residential schools for visually handicapped children had the longest history and the most pressing desire for standards, a decision was made to translate the COMSTAC standards for education into a guide for residential schools. Standards for day schools, preschool programs and programs

for multihandicapped children were necessarily, temporarily set aside. During 1967 and 1968 Dr. Geraldine Scholl served as NAC's staff member on a committee which produced Self-Study and Evaluation Guide for Residential Schools (NAC, 1968). During the last decade, then, this Guide has been used by NAC in its accreditation process with residential schools. In 1971 NAC received recognition by the United States Office Of Education as a reliable authority with regard to the education of visually handicapped children and it was included on the Commissioner's list of nationally recognized accrediting associations. This was the first time in the history of Special Education that one of its components, residential schools for the visually handicapped, was elibible for accreditation by a nationally recognized association (Roberts, 1972).

As outlined in the Guide, the elements essential to the accreditation process include: evaluation in terms of the school's compliance with its own stated philosophy and objectives and the appropriateness of such philosophy and objectives to the reality of the school's educational task; evaluation of all components of the school's program; evaluation through self study; review of evaluation by a team of outside competent professionals; and periodic re-evaluation (Scholl, 1969).

Those familiar with the history of residential school education of visually handicapped children will recall that after the mid-fifties the numbers of these children who were enrolled in day schools increased steadily with a concomitant decrease of enroll in residential schools. Thus the residential schools were able to consider the development of specialized programs for visually handicapped children who were multiply handicapped. The Rubella epidemics of the mid-sixties increased the numbers of these children who needed an education which was different from the traditional residential school program. Thus, by 1968 when the Guide was published, the residential school population was repidly changing. Since the Guide allowed for a great deal of flexibility which permitted each applicant residential school to complete the self study in terms of its own program, it has been a valuable and often-used document.

While NAC intends to up-date its standards about every ten years, in this case the time-table was moved ahead somewhat in recognition of the vast changes which have taken place in residential schools. Thus in December, 1976 a revision of the standards was initiated.

Procedure

NAC appointed a coordinating committee to oversee the revision of the residential school Guide. The coordinating committee selected members for four sub-committees: Preschool; Curriculum; Supporting Services and Other Related Self-Study Guides. The curriculum sub-committee was also assigned the task of preparing a guide for programs for multihandicapped children.

Members of the four sub-committees worked during the winter and spring of 1977 to produce draft copies of self-study and evaluation guides in the following areas: School Philosophy and Profile; Preschool Services; Other Service Program; Curriculum Planning and Evaluation; Program for Multihandicapped students; Academic Program; Program for Independent Living; Educational Resources Program; Leisure Education; Residential Living Program; Health Services; and Educational Diagnostic and Counseling Services.

During the fall of 1977 and early spring of 1978 the draft standards have been field-tested in actual use as instruments for self study and on-site review in seven schools. Copies of the drafts were also circulated on request for national review by interested professionals in the field. Following the field tests and national review the sub-committees met for work sessions to revise the drafts in the light of suggestions and of observations during field tests. Many members of the sub-committees participated as members of on-site review teams at field-test schools so that they could gain first-hand information about the appropriateness of the instruments in actual use.

Current Status

In June 1978 the revised draft copies of the standards will

be presented to the coordinating committee. Following careful review and possibly revision by that group, the documents will receive full review by NAC's Board of Directors and its Commission on Standards. Publication of the new guides is scheduled for the Winter of 1979.

Next Steps

The revised guides which are designed for the self study and on-site review of today's residential schools should enable these schools to more easily assess the quality of their programs through the accreditation process.

In addition, the preschool guide should be of special interest to agencies which offer services to preschool children and their families and to public day schools which have or intend to institute services for children beginning at age three under P.L. 94-142. Since many public day schools have not had experience with preschool children, this guide may be expecially relevant not only for program evaluation but for guidance in program planning.

While the NAC guides are directed to residential schools, the standards which are presented will be useful to supervisors and teachers in all settings where visually handicapped children are educated.

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THE NATIONAL STUDY FOR SCHOOL EVALUATION DAY SCHOOL PROJECT[1]

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Introduction

Since the publication of the residential school Guide (NAC, 1968), there has been increasing interest in having a similar instrument for use in day school programs for visually handicapped pupils. More recently, some educators of the visually handicapped are concerned that the implementation of P.L. 94-142 may have a detrimental effect on the education of pupils in regular schools because the curricular areas which are essential to meet their needs may be neglected in the emphasis on "least restrictive environment" (Hapeman, 1977). In addition, mainstreaming may be interpreted as regular class placement without supplementary services and with no recognition that visually handicapped pupils require specialized instruction in selected areas to assure a quality educational program.

In 1975 the Standards Committee of the Association for Education of the Visually Handicapped was allocated funds by the executive board to review the whole area of standards and to select some aspect for intensive study. The Committee recognized the need for an evaluation guide for day school programs as being most critical and undertook a survey to identify those instructional areas over and above the typical school curriculum necessary to provide a quality program for visually handicapped students being educated in regular schools (Papineau, 1976).

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[1]The study reported herein was funded in part by a grant from the National Study of School Evaluation, National Study Research Proposals, Bloomington, Indiana.

A Survey Form was distributed to teachers to solicit opinions regarding specialized curricular areas. Responses were received from 42 teachers employed in various school districts from the states of Wisconsin, Maryland, Texas, and Florida. On the basis of data obtained from this form, 18 curricular areas were identified.

Data from this survey were used to prepare an application for funds to develop a self-study and evaluation guide. With the grant received from the National Study of School Evaluation, a project was initiated to: review the appropriateness of existing guides used in assessing regular school programs; and to develop a supplement or guide to assess the specialized instructional areas.

The purpose of this paper is to summarize this project which resulted in the Self-Study and Evaluation Guide for Day Programs for Visually Handicapped Pupils (Scholl, 1978).

Summary of the Project

The study was conducted in two phases carried out simultaneously; 104 teachers from six states participated.

Phase I

The purpose of the first phase was to assess the extent to which existing guides published by the National Study of School Evaluation (NSEE, 1970, 1973, 1975) and used by some regional accrediting agencies in the evaluation of regular schools are appropriate for day programs for visually handicapped pupils. This review tested the assumption that school programs for visually handicapped pupils should include the full range of experiences provided normal pupils.

In general, there was a high level of satisfaction with the appropriateness of these guides to assess the curricular areas offered to visually handicapped pupils as a part of the regular school program. In general, no curricular area was viewed as inappropriate.

The following statements summarize the major reactions from the 104 teachers:

1. Data concerning mental ability, student enrollment, stability of student population, age-grade distribution, information regarding parents, and characteristics of the school district population were not considered necessary for programs for visually handicapped pupils.
2. Personnel in programs for visually handicapped pupils should prepare a separate statement of philosophy and objectives for the program.
3. The media services section should include descriptions of the specialized resources available for the visually handicapped from regional instructional materials centers and other specialized resources.

On the basis of findings from Phase I, it was decided that the proposed guide should be prepared as a supplement to the already existing guides.

Phase II

The purpose of Phase II was to obtain information from the 104 teachers regarding the relevance of degree of vision and level of intellectual functioning for each of the 18 curricular areas identified in the earlier survey. Teachers were requested to rate each area according to its importance for pupils with useful vision and those with no useful vision; and for pupils with varying levels of intellectual functioning: normal, mildly retarded, moderately retarded, and severely retarded.

The major findings were:

1. Six areas were considered as vitally important for all or almost all visually handicapped pupils regardless of degree of vision or level of intellectual functioning: daily living skills, leisure time activities, physical education, sensory awareness training, social skills and visual efficiency training.
2. Nine curricular areas showed declining importance as the level of intellectual functioning declined: concept development, human sexuality, map reading, orientation and mobility,

reference material skills, vocational training, braille, Optacon, and typing.

3. In general, teachers viewed all curricular areas as being equally useful for all pupils regardless of degree of vision. Some teachers viewed visual efficiency training as important for all regardless of how limited the vision; a few teachers viewed instruction in braille as important to pupils with useful vision.
4. For the severely retarded pupils, teachers identified six areas as being important: daily living skills, leisure time activities, physical education, sensory awareness training, social skills, and visual efficiency training.
5. There was a general pattern of introducing curricular areas later in the school years as levels of intelligence declined.
6. Abacus, braille, Optacon, and visual efficiency training were the only subjects considered to be exclusively within the purvue of teachers of the visually handicapped.
7. In general, teachers indicated that instruction in the special curricular areas should begin early in the school years and continue throughout secondary school.
8. There was no evidence that any curricular area should be taught for a specified period of time, i.e., until proficiency was achieved.

A more complete report of these findings may be found in Scholl (1978) and Scholl and Weihl (1978).

Description of the Guide

With guidance from the study described above, a self-study and evaluation guide for day school programs was prepared. The open narrative format of the National Study of School Evaluation instruments (1970, 1973, 1975) was adopted. Material from these instruments and from the National Accreditation Council national review and field test drafts of Self Study and Evaluation Guides (1977) was used. The guide was designed to be used independently, or as an instrument to accompany the one(s) used by a regular school applying for accreditation from one of the regional accrediting

agencies, or as an instrument used by a residential school conducting as part of its total program a day school component when applying for accreditation from the National Accreditation Council.

The Guide consists of the following sections:

A: Instructions
B: Philosophy and Objectives
C: Program and Community Profile
D: The Plan for Learning Experiences
E: Instructional Areas Offered to All Pupils
F: Special Instructional Areas and Techniques
G: Non-academic Areas
H: Evaluation Summary

Sections B and C solicit information in their respective areas relative to philosophy and objectives, the program, nature and needs of the pupils, and characteristics of the school and community. Section D requests general information about specific offerings in the three areas covered by Sections E, F, and G. Then in these three sections the staff provides specific information about these areas under the headings: Introduction, Nature of the Program (Planning and Organization, Instructional Areas, including Content and Activities, Instructional Staff and Facilities, Materials, and Equipment), Evaluation, and Programming for Improvement. The latter two sections are common to Sections D, E, F, and G. The final section (H) asks staff to summarize the evaluations and plans for improvement from the four preceding sections.

Summary

P.L. 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, mandates that special education programs and services implement a system for program evaluation. This project focused on the development of an instrument that could be used by school districts in meeting that mandate for programs for visually handicapped pupils.

In a preliminary survey, data from 42 teachers in four states identified 18 special techniques/materials and curricular areas. During the major study, 104 teachers, about equally divided amor the three levels, i.e., elementary, junior high/middle, and secondary, provided input concerning the appropriateness of three instruments commonly employed in the evaluation of regular school programs at the three levels and indicated for each of the 18 curricular areas the level of intellectual functioning and degree of vision that might determine whether and when each should be included in the school curriculum.

On the basis of findings from this study the Self-Study and Evaluation Guide for Day Programs for Visually Handicapped Pupils: A Guide for Program Improvement (Scholl, 1978) was prepared.

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GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION OF TEACHERS AND PROGRAMMING FOR VISUALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Paper Presented at the
56th Annual International Convention
of CEC
in Kansas City, Missouri
May 3-5, 1978

by
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American Foundation for the Blind

INTRODUCTION

We have for too long represented to the world that the blind need special treatment while at the same time asking the sighted population to treat the blind without unusual or other-than-normal attitudes. This seemingly opposing attitudinal structure has created across the nation a crisis situation in the development of special education program planning for our school age visually handicapped youngsters.

Community public day school programs for the visually impaired have grown rapidly during the last forty years over the entire nation. In many cases, their development has been the result of a long, careful planning process by educators of visually impaired children. Other programs have evolved because of the expressed desires of individual parents to keep their children at home. Presently, the pattern is such that in each area the programs operate in an unique fashion depending upon geography, population, administrative policy, and the teacher's own perception of his or her role.

With state and federal mandates such as Federal Public Law 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, children are being identified, assessed and hopefully appropriately programmed for in the least restrictive environment. The public school has responsibility in the determination of the basic philosophy it holds with regard to children with special needs. This philosophy should be based on the premise that these children are first of all children with the same basic needs as all other children. Further, that their potential as productive and accepted members of society is not only great but is the school's responsibility to release. Within such a framework the public school must also realistically diagnose and understand the special needs occasioned by visual handicaps and attempt to serve these efficiently.

The education of blind with sighted children in public day school programs is predicated upon the basic philosophy that all children have a right to remain with their families and in their communities during the course of their education; that a visually handicapped child has a right to be counted as one of the children of the family and of the community; and that both the family and the community have an obligation to provide for the blind child, as a minimum, the equivalent of what he might have had if sighted.

A variety of organizational patterns or plans are often necessary for developing a complete educational program for visually

handicapped children and procedures should be established to assure that each child will be placed or transferred to the particular plan best suited to his needs at any given time. Organizational plans most frequently provided for these children are residential schools, special classes, resource rooms, itinerant teachers and teacher consultants.

It is important to note that when listing the various organizational patterns of educational programs serving the visually handicapped, residential schools are clearly among the alternatives available. Two phrases in the Education of All Handicapped Children Act require placement procedures of visually handicapped children to consider all programming variations and select the one individually suited to his needs. These two phrases to which I refer are least restrictive environment and free appropriate public education. No one person should be so naive as to think least restrictive environment simply means placement in a community public school program. For if one meets the requirements implied in the phrase free appropriate public education, the public school program without the appropriate support services and special educational personnel could be considered the most restricted educational environment for the child.

At no time should different educational program services available to the visually handicapped child be viewed in isolation or as an either/or proposition. For all programmatic patterns must be considered feasible at various times in a child's development, and the spectrum of educational alternatives should be treated as a continuum of educational programmatic considerations. In order to demonstrate that special education is a part of all education and to reduce the all too frequent existing dichotomy between programs, the special education teacher must play a fluid role, sometimes acting as leader but at all times being ready to play the supportive role in helping the team and the regular classroom teacher meet the needs of the child. It is the very role of the teacher of the visually handicapped that is in a period of transition and holds for the future a potentially critical period in teacher preparation programs, state teacher certification requirements and emerging program models. The professional verbiage of the day espouses generic service systems supposedly to minimize duplication of programming for all exceptional children. Would that the term generic programming for our handicapped would soon become a process in special education to be wisely applied.

However, far too often we are finding the bases for generic programmatic approach economically devised other than educationally sound. An example of the problems this approach creates can be found when looking at some state teacher certification procedures

in special education. At present, in some states one finds that certification to teach the visually handicapped is part of an overall credential to teach the physically handicapped. This trend to more broadly defined procedures for awarding credentials deserves close scrutiny to ensure that the special skills that are essential for teaching the visually handicapped school age population do not become lost, or glossed over as being nice but not necessary.

It is time the profession steps back and articulates the differences that are unique to the visually handicapped child and the special professional and administrative supports required in order to actually realize the letter of PL 94-142 demanding free appropriate public education for all children.

In an attempt to address this issue the American Foundation for the Blind has recently completed two projects that I will discuss this evening. The first concerns the identification of the specialized competencies for teachers of the visually handicapped over and above those to teach sighted children. The second is the completion of Guidelines for State and Local Administrators serving visually handicapped children in community school programs.

Teacher Competency

Background

Perhaps the earliest formal effort to identify competencies needed by teachers of handicapped children was the study directed by Mackie for the U.S. Office of Education (Mackie, 1960). This study resulted in two publications related to the visually handicapped: Teachers of Children Who Are Blind (Mackie and Dunn, 1955) and Teachers of Children Who Are Partially Sighted (Mackie and Cohoe, 1956).

In the years that followed this study, interest in competencies for teachers of the visually handicapped was sparked by the efforts of the American Foundation for the Blind which sponsored two national work sessions in 1958 and 1959, resulting in the publication of program objectives for a teacher education sequence and standards for college and university programs of preparation (Roberts, 1973).

The recent growing interest in competency based teacher education programs led to the completion of the most recent study in this area, Competency Based Curriculum for Teachers of the Visually Handicapped: A National Study (Spungin, 1977)

Procedure

From 1973 to 1975 the American Foundation for the Blind sponsored six meetings of representatives of 22 colleges and universities with professional preparation programs in the area of the visually handicapped (Spungin, 1977). After eight revisions, a field test edition of competencies for teachers resulted from these efforts. These competencies were developed under the following 12 goal areas:

The Competencies

Goal 1.0 Teacher will demonstrate knowledge of normal and typical development patterns in visually handicapped learners.

Goal 2.0 Teacher will demonstrate the ability to assess visually handicapped learners using a variety of informal and formal procedures.

Goal 3.0 Teacher will demonstrate the ability to select, design and/or modify specialized curricula for visually handicapped learners.

Goal 4.0 Teacher will demonstrate proficiency in the operation of media and devices necessary for the education of the visually handicapped learner.

Goal 5.0 Teacher will utilize instructional strategies to facilitate learning in visually handicapped children.

Goal 6.0 Teacher can effectively utilize instructional materials, media, devices, aids, etc. appropriate to the individual needs of visually handicapped children.

Goal 7.0 Teacher will demonstrate ability to identify and provide appropriate counseling and guidance services to visually handicapped learners, and significant others.

Goal 8.0 Teacher will demonstrate ability to utilize local, state and national resources to assist in the delivery of services to the visually handicapped learner.

Goal 9.0 Teacher will demonstrate knowledge of and opportunity for research with visually handicapped learner.

Goal 10.0 Teacher will accept responsibilities of being a member of the teaching profession and will make a commitment to improve services for visually handicapped learners.

Goal 11.0 Teacher will demonstrate ability to administer and/or supervise programs for visually handicapped learners, including ancillary personnel, para-professionals, and volunteers.

Goal 12.0 Teacher can demonstrate the ability to evaluate both instructional sequences and overall program effectiveness of various school programs and agencies serving visually handicapped learners.

The next part of the study involved field testing. Teachers were asked to respond to each competency on a 5-point scale whether they agreed or disagreed. They were also asked to define their roles and functions and to estimate the percentage of time spent in various activities. Responses were received from 807 persons, for a 41 percent response rate (Spungin, 1977).

For purposes of data analysis, the competencies were grouped as follows: assessment and evaluation, educational and supervision, media and technology, school-community relations and research. While variations appeared among teachers by role and proportion of time spent on various school related activities, there was sufficient agreement with the competencies to warrant further study. An example of the competencies and format can be seen in the following:

Happily the research portion of this study is completed and the publication is now available from the American Foundation for the Blind. One suggested area for future research was that this study should serve as the base for future assessment of teachers in order to provide direction for teacher preparation programs. Hopefully this study provides a good beginning; teachers in the field must now take the next step.

This document, while it may be idealistic in the number of competencies and the expectation that teachers should possess most of all of them, should nevertheless be viewed as providing an ideal. One next step should be the development of criteria for pre- and in-service teachers to assess the knowledge and skills they possess. This would entail adding specifics to the achievement indicators so that objective evidence of the competency can be obtained. Further, the document should be of value to supervisors and administrators in the field who are pressured to accept personnel who do not meet certification standards and are expected to serve handicapped pupils for whom they have no training.

Guidelines for Public School Programs

Background

P.L. 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, will require that guidelines be established for the operation of programs and services to all handicapped pupils. During a 1976

GOAL 1.0

TEACHER WILL DEMONSTRATE KNOWLEDGE OF NORMAL AND ATYPICAL DEVELOPMENTAL PATTERNS IN VISUALLY HANDICAPPED LEARNERS.

Entry Level of Competency:

Can demonstrate knowledge of normal growth and development from birth to adulthood.

Can demonstrate knowledge of atypical patterns of growth and development.

KNOWLEDGE The teacher has:	SKILL The teacher can:	ACHIEVEMENT INDICATORS Proficiency is demonstrated when the teacher can:
1.1 Knowledge of the effects of visual handicaps on affective, psychomotor, and cognitive development.	1.1.1 Identify the impact on development of congenital total blindness, congenital low vision, acquired visual loss, etc.	1.1.1.1 Present orally and in writing examinations and tests as well as analyses of case studies.
1.2 Knowledge of the effects of additional handicaps on development.	1.2.1 Analyze the interactive effects of combination of handicaps in specific visually handicapped learners.	1.2.1.1 Present orally and in writing examinations and tests as well as analyses of case studies.

meeting at the American Printing House for the Blind in Louisville a group of concerned educators of the visually handicapped met to discuss ways in which such guidelines could be developed that would be useful in monitoring whether programs were meeting the intent of this legislation.

Procedure

The meeting in Louisville stimulated the planning of a workshop which was held in St. Louis on March 21-25, 1977, under the sponsorship of the American Foundation for the Blind. Prior to this workshop, materials were gathered from various states that had any existing guidelines for public school programs serving the visually handicapped. Fourteen professional educators in the field worked in three groups and prepared draft documents covering the following areas: Administration, including legislation, funding, identification and assessment of the target population, program design and personnel; Program including organization, continuum of services, early childhood, assessment, and teacher responsibilities; and Program Supports, including physical facilities, materials and equipment, ancillary services and national/state/local resources. The products of the three groups were then combined into a draft document which was then circulated to the participants for further review and suggested revising. The Table of Contents is as follows:

The document with a preface written by Dr. Ed Martin is scheduled for publication in June by the American Foundation for the Blind and will be part of American Foundation for the Blind Practice Series Reports available at a cost of $2.00 each.

The document which has been reviewed by professionals will be of value to directors and supervisors in order to provide them with objective guidelines so that program quality cannot be eroded with the interpretation that "least restrictive environment" means a regular class without necessary instruction in specialized areas or being served by teachers not certified in the area of the visually handicapped.

These national efforts of the American Foundation for the Blind are only a beginning in addressing the many problems and issues concerning mainstreaming. Now more than ever before we need strong advocates fighting for programs specific to the

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needs of the visually handicapped population. Because without making visible the special needs of these children they will continue, in ever increasing numbers, to fall through the special educational cracks of the developing generic program models.